



GENERAL ORDER

Peer Support Program

The purpose of this General Order is to establish the guidelines of the Peer Support program.

I. General

- A. The Peer Support program is a voluntary and confidential program for all employees and their families. The purpose of the program is to provide support for personal and/or work related problems before they become acute. Peer Support members are trained to be effective listeners, provide feedback, clarify issues and assist the employee in identifying options for problem resolution by providing information on referrals. Peer Support members are not therapists. When problems appear to require specialized assistance, referral information will be made available to employees or their families.
- B. Employees acting within the scope of their responsibilities as a Peer Support member while off duty are deemed agents, acting on behalf of the Sheriff's Department for purposes of workers' compensation coverage if verified and needed.

II. Organizational Structure

- A. The Peer Support program will be administered by the members of the Peer Support Advisory Committee which reports administratively to the Peer Support Coordinator. The Peer Support Coordinator reports directly to the Undersheriff. The Peer Support Coordinator shall be chosen from the ranks of the Peer Support members with the approval of the Peer Support Advisory Committee and the Undersheriff.
- B. The Peer Support Advisory Committee shall consist of six non-management employees, a consulting psychologist trained in law enforcement personnel counseling, and a management representative from the Department's Employee Relations Office. Peer Support Advisory Committee members shall be selected from trained Peer Support members throughout the Department. Program development and policies will be made by the six members of the Peer Support Advisory Committee with the concurrence of the Peer Support Program Coordinator and the management representative.

1. The members of the Peer Support Advisory Committee shall serve for a period of two years. Peer Support Advisory Committee members will be from the ranks of active Peer Support members and will serve with the approval of the majority of Peer Support members.
 2. The two-year term limit does not prevent an advisory committee member from being reappointed to another two-year term.
 3. Peer Support Advisory Committee members may be removed from the committee as outlined in Section V of this General Order.
- B. The Peer Support Program Coordinator will be responsible for maintaining liaison and communication among management, Office of the Undersheriff, Peer Support members and the advisory committee. In addition, the Peer Support Coordinator will be responsible for the following administrative duties:
1. Budgetary concerns that involve expenses for training, equipment and materials necessary for the program.
 2. Ensure the Peer Support Advisory Committee is carrying forth and implementing the program they have developed in accordance with their training.
 3. Ensure the statistical information collected by Peer Support members is correlated, made available to the coordinator and forwarded to the staff of the Undersheriff on a monthly basis.
 4. Act as liaison between management and the Peer Support group.
 - a. Handle all questions concerning the program, its direction, procedures and conduct of the Peer Support members.
 - b. Promote awareness of the program to management and ensure that management is also represented by providing training to management personnel and their inclusion in the program.
 5. Develop and maintain awareness of all personnel of the availability of the Peer Support program through roll call training and other forms of information and training. Develop and maintain contact with resources and referrals such as SCDSA, the chaplaincy and other Peer Support programs throughout the state.

III. Participation

- A. All participation in Peer Support shall be voluntary and initiated by the person seeking assistance. There will be no mandatory referrals of Department employees to the Peer Support program nor will Peer Support members be directed or ordered to initiate contact with Department employees. This does not preclude a Peer Support member from initiating a voluntary contact when learning an employee is facing a job or personal crisis. The employee's participation in such Peer Support contacts shall be voluntary.

IV. Confidentiality

- A. Except as set forth in this directive, the Peer Support member shall maintain confidentiality entrusted to him/her and will not discuss any information developed during a Peer Support session. It is understood, however, that no confidential "privileged communication" otherwise recognized by law shall arise from the status of a Peer Support member. Peer Support members do not have complete confidentiality as in the relationship of doctor or attorney client privilege. Unless the Peer Support member is directly involved in, or is a direct witness to, an incident that is subject to any disciplinary investigation, no information developed in Peer Support session can or will be used in any possible future disciplinary proceedings.
- B. The Peer Support member shall advise the employee that confidentiality is to be strictly maintained except in these instances:
 - 1. Where the information received by the Peer Support member must be revealed by law, such as cases of criminal conduct.
 - 2. Where the Peer Support member is a participant or direct witness.
 - 3. Where there is reason to believe the employee intends to injure himself or another person. In the case of threatened serious injury, a reasonable attempt shall be made to warn the intended victim.
 - 4. Where due to substance abuse, the employee is a danger to self, citizens or fellow employees.
 - 5. In the above cases, the Peer Support member shall notify the Peer Support Coordinator or in his or her absence, the appropriate supervisory officer; e.g., watch commander.

- C. The Peer Support member will not be ordered to give information to the Department concerning the content of Peer Support sessions except as listed in Section IV, paragraph B. The Peer Support member shall determine if information requested must be revealed based upon the criteria described above.
- D. Being a Peer Support member does not give the right to withhold information that the Peer Support member has independent knowledge of as listed in Section IV, paragraph B.
- E. Supervisory officers who are Peer members, cannot abdicate their supervisory responsibilities when on duty and confronted by misconduct, disciplinary problems or other improper actions on the part of employees.

V. Peer Support Program Training, Selection and Deselection

- A. All initial Peer Support training will be completed through a POST certified Basic Peer Support course. All Peer Support members will be required to attend a refresher course. All Peer Support members shall be required to attend all additional training and meetings as required or requested by the Peer Support Advisory Committee.
- B. The Peer Support Advisory Committee is committed to selecting Peer Support group members with varied ethnic, cultural, gender and life experiences. Peer Support member selection/removal will be made through a majority vote. The following criteria shall be used:
 - 1. Expressed desire, either verbally or by a written request, to the Peer Support Advisory Committee through the Peer Support Coordinator to participate as a Peer Support member. Participation in the program includes:
 - a. Willingness to donate time without compensation when approached or requested on off-duty time.
 - b. Willingness to attend required meetings and training sessions.
 - c. Willingness to keep and forward statistics to the Peer Support Advisory Committee on a monthly basis.
 - d. Willingness to sign an understanding of confidentiality.
 - e. Willingness to commit to a two-year term in the Peer Support program.

2. Demonstrate through an oral interview to the Peer Support Advisory Committee, an understanding of the concept of confidentiality and non-judgmental thinking.
3. Demonstrate to the advisory committee through a letter of compliance from their immediate supervisor, that they are not currently undergoing a disciplinary proceeding, investigation or a personal improvement plan. Sick leave usage will also be considered.